

LOVECRAFT STUDIES **11**



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The Revision Mythos

by Robert M. Price

[This article, first published in Crypt of Cthulhu for Candlemas 1983, has been extensively revised for this appearance.—Ed.]

In the bewildering theogonic jungle that has sprouted in Cthulhu Mythos fiction since Lovecraft, it has become increasingly difficult to remember which author begat which deity. Many still persist in mistakenly ascribing Derleth's Hastur the Unspeakable and Smith's Tsathoggua to Lovecraft. Yet once one has segregated Lovecraft's Great Old Ones from their imitators, a further, rather surprising, distinction remains to be drawn. For it happens that certain Lovecraftian deities appear only in the so-called "revisions", tales largely ghost-written for other, less talented writers. Writing under the persona of Hazel Heald, Zealia Bishop, or Adolphe de Castro, Lovecraft would not only "lend" them his own monsters on occasion; he also created new fiends just for them. Just as Clark Ashton Smith created Tsathoggua and Frank Belknap Long invented the Hounds of Tindalos, Lovecraft wanted it to appear that Bishop had created Yig, or Heald Ghanothoa.

First, let us establish which beings belong to Lovecraft's "own" pantheon. There are of course the "big five": Cthulhu, Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Yog-Sothoth, and Shug-Niggurath. Smith's Tsathoggua is picked up by Lovecraft as well. As we have said, all these gods can and do appear in the revision tales, as if their ostensible authors were borrowing from Lovecraft. But there is a longer list of gods created by Lovecraft for his revision clients, and these deities never trespass into his own acknowledged fiction (we will deal presently with an apparent exception which only proves the rule). However, they do appear interchangeably within revision tales of various clients. Thus we may speak not only of, e.g., a "Heald Mythos" or a "Bishop Mythos", but more broadly of a common "Revision Mythos". This set of gods is as follows: Yig the Father of Serpents, Nug and Yeb, Ghanothoa, Rhan-Tegoth, Gnoph-keh, and perhaps one or two others.

Of these, Yig is certainly the most important. He appears first in "The Curse of Yig" (1928) where he is a semi-anthropomorphic snake-god, who takes severe vengeance upon those unwise enough to kill his children. In this story, Yig seems to be but a standard Indian totem-divinity. He is glancingly mentioned in "The Electric Executioner" (1929), written for Adolphe de Castro, and in "Out of the Eons" (1933), written for Hazel Heald. In the former, Yig is said to have been an ancient Aztec divinity,

still worshipped, in fact, by the remnants of the Aztecs. In "The Curse of Yig" he is supposed to predate the Aztecs as the primordial prototype of later Aztec legends of Quetzalcoatal. In "Out of the Eons", Yig was worshipped all the way back in antediluvian Mu. He is placed in a setting that somewhat combines these in Lovecraft-Bishop's "The Mound" (1929-30), being one of the principal gods of K'n-yan, the underground civilization in Oklahoma. Thus he is venerated by a lost race in Indian territory as "the principle of life symbolised as the Father of all Serpents",¹ a plainly phallic association.

Readers may be tempted to point out that Yig is mentioned in one of the stories Lovecraft claimed as his own, "The Whisperer in Darkness". Wilmarth says that "The legend of Yig, Father of Serpents, remained figurative no longer".² But note that Lovecraft also goes out of his way in the same paragraph to mention Long's Hounds of Tindalos and Smith's Tsathoggua and Commoriom Myth-Cycle, and even mentions Smith by name ("Klarkash-Ton")! The reference to Yig should be understood in the same way, as if Lovecraft is tipping his hat to Zealia Bishop along with Long and Smith. In fact, Yig's presence in this context only underscores our point—Lovecraft is "borrowing" Yig from someone else's mythos!

Moving on to Nug and Yeb, we find them mentioned only in passing in "Out of the Eons" (Heald), "The Last Test" (de Castro), and "The Mound" (Bishop). In each story, they are said to be worshipped, respectively, in Mu, Egypt, and K'n-yan. In a letter to Willis Conover, Lovecraft describes them as "evil twins", the offspring of Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth and the asexual progenitors, respectively, of Cthulhu and Tsathoggua! As if to belie their considerable theogonic importance, they are "only ten feet in diameter when in their average form"³ [Lovecraft at Last, p. 93]. They are usually mentioned together.

Will Murray has drawn attention to the fact that Nug and Yeg were favorites of Lovecraft. He often made fanciful references to them in the headings and closings of his letters. Though meant in jest, such references do provide some idea of Lovecraft's conception of the "twin blasphemies".⁴ He speaks of a "shrine of Nug, in the Temple of Infra-Red Vapour on the Doomed Nebula Zlykariob".⁵ He connects Nug also with Kadath in the Cold Waste, marking an epiphany of the god there.⁶ He playfully refers to himself as the "Guardian of the Black Fire of Nug and Yeb".⁷ They are served with "The Black Litany of Nug & Yeg".⁸ Lovecraft would seem, then, to have imagined Nug and Yeb served by a cult virtually intergalactic in scope!

¹The Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions (1970), p. 345.

²The Dunwich Horror and Others (Arkham House, 1984), p. 256.

³Lovecraft at Last (1975), p. 93; SL IV.183.

⁴See Murray's "The Natures of Nug and Yeb", Lovecraft Studies, 3, No. 2 (Fall 1984), 52-59, and "Imaginative Allusions in Lovecraft's Letters" (Crypt of Cthulhu, forthcoming).

⁵SL III.247.

⁶SL IV.93.

⁷SL III.286.

⁸SL V.123.

Ghatanotha is the "devil god" brought to earth (Mu, specifically) by the "Elder Ones from Yuggoth" according to "Out of the Eons". William Fulwiler has suggested that the "alien spawn from the dark planet Yuggoth" in view here are not the same as the "living fungi from Yuggoth" encountered by Wilmarth and Akeley in "The Whisperer in Darkness". Rather, since in "Out of the Eons" they are said to have "perished eons before" the time of T'yog in ancient Mu, they are more likely to be identified with the "elder race extinct and forgotten before the beings [i.e. the fungi] came to Yuggoth from the ultimate voids."⁹ Note the similarity of terms: "Elder Ones" in "Out of the Eons", the "elder race" in "The Whisperer in Darkness".

In many ways Ghatanotha seems to be a doublet of Cthulhu, who perhaps significantly is not mentioned in this tale. Consider the resemblances. As to appearance, Ghatanotha is "gigantic—tentacled—proboscidian—octopus-eyed—semi-amorphous—plastic—partly squamous and partly rugose. . . ."¹⁰ He "lowered and brooded eternally though unseen in the crypts below that fortress on [Mount] Yaddith-Gho" which made a "geometrically abnormal outline against the sky" until the sinking of Mu beneath the waves.¹¹ The parallels to tentacled and octopoid Cthulhu and his non-Euclidean palace in R'lyeh, atop a central mountain now deep beneath the ocean, are striking. Not only so, but both Cthulhu and Ghatanotha are served through the ages by degenerate cults of half-breed Polynesian sailors. One important difference is that while Cthulhu sends maddening dreams, Ghatanotha's mind-blasting appearance literally paralyzes the onlooker with fear. But on the whole, we receive the impression that in Ghatanotha Lovecraft was having Heald "imitate" his own Cthulhu.

Like Ghatanotha, Rhan-Tegoth appears in but a single story, "The Horror in the Museum" (Heald). There he is discovered frozen upon a throne in an arctic ice cave. He is said to have come (like Ghatanotha) to earth from Yuggoth, and to be some kind of link with the Old Ones: "If It dies the Old Ones can never come back!"¹¹ Thus one wonders if Rhan-Tegoth is not to be understood along the lines of Wilbur Whateley and his brother, whose births were necessary if Yog-Sothoth was to be unleashed on the world. Rhan-Tegoth is described in surprisingly copious detail. "Fully ten feet high despite a shambling, crouching attitude expressive of infinite cosmic malignancy", he had a "globular torso", a "bubble-like suggestion of a head", "three fishy eyes", a "foot-long proboscis", "bulging gills", a "monstrous capillation of asp-like suckers", and "six sinuous limbs with their black paws and crab-like claws—God!"¹²

In the same story, Lovecraft tosses off a single reference to "the sharp horn of Gnoph-keh, the hairy myth-thing of the Greenland ice, that walked sometimes on two legs, sometimes on four, and sometimes on six." This is all we are told, yet the brief note is interesting. The name "Gnoph-keh" does occur in Lovecraft's acknowledged works, but there it is

⁹*Horror in the Museum*, p. 139; *Dunwich Horror*, p. 254.

¹⁰*Horror in the Museum*, p. 139.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

the name of a tribe of cannibal cave-men, who also happen to live in the Northlands. We could harmonize the two references by supposing that, as many primitive clans do, this group of pre-men had taken unto themselves the name of their totem-divinity. But it is difficult to believe Lovecraft had any such thing in mind. Instead it would seem that he purposely took a name from his own work and used it in a different sense, much as Derleth would later appropriate Bierce's and Chambers' Hastur to become a Great Old One. We have one more possible reference to this deity in one of Lovecraft's letters, when he refers glancingly to "the sunken monolith of Gnoph".¹³

Before we leave "The Horror in the Museum", let us note that we may even detect the presence of one or two more gods of the Revision Mythos: Noth-Yidik and K'thun. These do seem to be eldritch entities of some kind. They are invoked in a bit of Lovecraftian profanity: "Fool! Spawn of Noth-Yidik and effluvium of K'thun!"¹⁴ Conceivably, Noth-Yidik might be a planet, on analogy with the phrase "Yuggoth-spawn", but the context makes it more likely that Noth-Yidik is a creature of some sort. Cf. "son of the dogs that howl in the maelstrom of Azathoth"; also the parallel with "the spawn of Cthulhu" in *At the Mountains of Madness*.

With the phrase "effluvium of K'thun" we seem left even more desperately to our imagination, save for one fact. The same name, or part of it, occurs again in "The Whisperer in Darkness". Wilmarth recalls that on the phonograph recording of the Outer Ones he heard "an unpronounceable word or name, possibly N'gah-Kthun".¹⁵ Since the scene is a worship service in which the deities Shub-Niggurath and Nyarlathotep are mentioned, N'gah-Kthun, too, may be intended as a god. Yet on the other hand, in a letter to Smith written a year after "Whisperer", Lovecraft refers to "Gnarr-Kthun" as a "Black Sun . . . in the 7th Dimension beyond the Uttermost Rim".¹⁶ Since, as will be recalled, the Outer Ones hailed from beyond Yuggoth "on the rim", Kthun might refer to their home star, and the name might not be that of a god after all. Obviously it is impossible to be certain.

We may be dealing with one last revision Old One in a tantalizing reference in "Medusa's Coil". There among the monsters depicted in a painting of undersea R'lyeh we find described "the crocodile-headed beast with three legs and a dorsal row of tentacles". Since there is only one such creature present, whereas there are said to be several of each of the other kinds (less fully) described, this one would seem to be of central importance, likely the object of worship.

Finally, it might be asked why we are not considering Shub-Niggurath to be among the Revision Mythos pantheon, as she first appears in "The Last Test". The answer is simple: Lovecraft went on to invoke this fertility goddess in many of his acknowledged tales.

Even when Lovecraft used his own already-established One Ones in the

¹³SL V.41.

¹⁴*Horror in the Museum*, p. 123.

¹⁵*Dunwich Horror*, p. 267.

¹⁶SL III.411.

revision tales, he sometimes gave them a distinct flavor by using variant forms of their names. In doing so, he was following the example of Clark Ashton Smith, who in his story "Ubbo-Sathla" refers to Lovecraft's Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth as "Kthulhut" and "Yok-Zothoth". In fact, Lovecraft the ghost-writer plays with the same two names. Though he does often use the standard spelling "Cthulhu", he also uses no less than four variant forms in the revisions: "Tulu" ("The Mound"), "Clulu" ("Winged Death"), "Clooloo" ("Medusa's Coil"), and "Cthulhutl" ("The Electric Executioner").¹⁷ Also in "The Electric Executioner" we find "Yog-Sototl" for Yog-Sothoth. Even R'lyeh becomes "Relex" in "The Mound".

Lovecraft once used the "variant name" device in a particularly clever and intricate instance. In "The Electric Executioner", rewritten for de Castro, he refers to "Niggurat-Yig",¹⁸ a combination of the names Shug-Niggurath and Yig, the latter being ostensibly the creation of Zealia Bishop. So when the puppeteer Lovecraft has de Castro "borrow" Bishop's Yig, he uses a variant form in order to give it a distinctive "de Castro" ring!

Before we become carried away with our thesis, we must sound a cautionary note. It must be kept in mind that a good part of the reason for Lovecraft's use of these variants was the choice of exotic locales for the stories. "I try to give different variants of the same unearthly or prehistoric name to represent the different variants under which the different races refer to the same thing as remembered from primitive times. . . . Thus I have had *Yog-Sothoth* occur (in a story I wrote for a revision client) as *Yog-Sototl* among the Aztecs."¹⁹ Would not this factor alone seem to account adequately for the occurrence of variant forms of names in these stories? Perhaps so, but we must note that Lovecraft seems to exercise such care only in the revisions. Why, for instance, does "Cthulhu" sound precisely the same as pronounced by the mestizo sailor Castro, the Eskimos, the Louisiana bayou cultists, and the Chinese masters, all in the same story, "The Call of Cthulhu"?

One more juggling technique employed by Lovecraft in his revisions was to borrow Mythos trappings from other writers and use them more prominently in the revisions than he did when he cited them in his own stories. For instance, Lovecraft often simply mentions Smith's Tsathoggua in his own stories, but he devotes quite a bit of space to describing his ancient cultus in lightless N'kai in "The Mound". For the record, he also slips Tsathoggua (under the variant form "Sadoqua") into the Latin incantation from *De Vermis Mysteriis* that he composed for Bloch's "The Shambler from the Stars". Lovecraft notes in a letter that he had also used Tsathoggua in a story for de Castro.²⁰ Since the toad-god does not appear in either

¹⁷Contra the reading of the Arkham House text which reads simply "Cthulhu".

¹⁸Again, contra the Arkham House text, which has "Niggurat-Yig".

¹⁹SL IV.387-88.

²⁰In a letter to Emil Petaja, May 31, 1935, Lovecraft mentions that

"The Electric Executioner" or "The Last Test", we may take this as further evidence that Lovecraft rewrote at least one more tale for de Castro.²¹

Lovecraft also gives Smith's *Book of Eibon* more extensive treatment in "The Man of Stone" (written for Hazel Heald) than in his own stories, where he only mentions it in lists of forbidden books.

Likewise Robert E. Howard's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, which forms the basis for "Out of the Eons". In fact, in that tale Lovecraft developed Von Junzt's occult volume more fully than Howard himself ever did. In all this "robbing Peter to pay Paul", Lovecraft was apparently trying to make it look as if his revision clients borrowed not only from him but from other writers as well.

Just as Lovecraft created the famous towns of Arkham, Dunwich, Innsmouth, and Kingsport for his own stories, he has provided sinister and exotic locales for his revision tales. In the way of haunted towns and villages, we may list "dubious Chorazin" in New York State, the site of "The Diary of Alonzo Typer". The name was chosen by Lovecraft because of the ancient belief that the Antichrist would appear there. It is possible that Lovecraft also invented Fenham and Bayboro, Massachusetts, both "rural villages" where much of the action takes place in "The Loved Dead" and "Deaf, Dumb and Blind", both revisions for C. M. Eddy. No draft by Eddy of either work survives, so we cannot be certain that Lovecraft did invent Fenham. Rather, the likelihood is that they stood already in Eddy's drafts, since he used them again in "The Vengeful Vision" and "A Solitary Solution", both written in 1924, "during the Lovecraft association" (Muriel E. Eddy), but neither revised by Lovecraft. For the record, Eddy used Fenham yet again many years later in the unfinished fragment "Black Noon" (1967).²²

In the case of Zealia Bishop's "The Curse of Yig" and "The Mound", we know that the common Oklahoma setting was provided by Bishop, but Lovecraft did add a bit of "Bishop lore" by supplying a character who appears in both tales. He is the wizened Chief Grey Eagle who seems to know the secrets of both Yig and the people of K'n-yan and gives aid or warnings as the case may be. Though the two tales take place a generation apart, Chief Grey Eagle seems ageless. (Sally/Grandma Compton is another character common to both "The Mound" and "The Curse of Yig", but she was contributed by Zealia Bishop, and was based on a real person. "Grandma Compton, my sister's mother-in-law, told a horror story about a couple who pioneered in Oklahoma not far from where we were." This campfire tale, Bishop claimed, was the inspiration for "The Curse of Yig", while "The Mound" was "the outgrowth of another tale told by the Comptons from their recollections of

"I've also put Yog-Sothoth and Tsathoggua in yarns ghost-written for Adolphe de Castro . . ." (SL V.173).

²¹Lovecraft himself tells us elsewhere: "I did accidentally land . . . three tales of Old Dolph's" (SL III.204).

²²These stories may be found in C. M. Eddy, *Exit into Eternity* (Providence: Oxford Press, 1973).

two old Indians living near Binger, Oklahoma."²³)

The reviser Lovecraft moves to wilder climes in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key", where he first names a city on the Plateau of Leng. It is Yian-Ho, a forbidden city magically shielded from outside penetration. It is a fictional analogue to the legendary city of Shamballah. Swami Chandraputra informs us how the late occultist Harley Warren received an other-dimensional clock from a mysterious Yogi, "who said that he alone of living men had been to Yian-Ho, the hidden legacy of aeon-old Leng, and had borne certain things [obviously including the clock] away from that dreadful and forbidden city." Lovecraft borrowed Yian-Ho from Robert M. Chambers, who told of the fabulous city Yian in "The Maker of Moons" and *The Slayer of Souls*.

Yian-Ho does not appear in any of Lovecraft's own original tales, but it does surface again in Lumley's draft of "The Diary of Alonzo Typer", where it is merely mentioned. Lovecraft, however, elaborates on this bare reference, embellishing it along the lines of his earlier usage. Lovecraft now undercuts the exclusive claim of Warren's Yogi friend by making the sixteenth-century Dutch wizard Claes van der Heyl the first man to penetrate Yian-Ho:

To Yian-Ho, that lost and forbidden city of countless aeons whose place may not be told [Leng?], I have been in the veritable flesh of this body, as none other among the living has been. Therein have I found, and thence have I borne away, that knowledge which I would gladly lose, though I may not.

This confession parallels the statement of Barris, a character in Chambers' "The Maker of Moons":

Yian is a city . . . where the great river winds under the thousand bridges—where the gardens are sweet-scented, and the air is filled with the music of silver bells. . . . It lies across the seven oceans and the river which is longer than from the earth to the moon. . . . I have seen it. . . . I have seen the dead plains of Black Cathay and I have crossed the mountains of Death, whose summits are above the atmosphere.²⁴

(Incidentally, the same story involves the Chinese brotherhood of alchemists and sorcerers, the "Kuen-Yuin", in which we are perhaps to recognize the inspiration for Lovecraft's own "K'n-yan".)

Chambers' original form "Yian" occurs, juxtaposed with "Leng", in a

²³ Zealia Bishop, *The Curse of Yig* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1953), pp. 145, 147.

²⁴ Robert W. Chambers, "The Maker of Moons" in Alden H. Norton, ed., *Hauntings and Horrors: Ten Grisly Tales* (New York: Berkley, 1972), p. 39.

list of other "borrowed" items, including Chambers' "Yellow Sign" and Dunsany's "Bethmoora", in "The Whisperer in Darkness".

It is worth noting that Swami Chandraputra, who appears in "Through the Gates of the Silver Key", also manages to pop up in "Out of the Eons", another re-write, but nowhere else.

The hidden city of Shamballah, a piece of Tibetan legendry, appears in three revisions: "The Diary of Alonzo Typer", "The Tree on the Hill", and "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" (though this reference was finally removed before publication). Lovecraft makes passing and cryptic references to the remote Hoggar Region, an arid plateau in Algeria, in two more revisions, "Medusa's Coil" and "The Last Test". In both stories it appears that the Hoggar Region is the site of ancient Atlantean colonies.²⁵ Once again, neither Shamballah nor the Hoggar Region come in for any mention anywhere but in the pages of the revisions.

Finally, Lovecraft raises James Churchward's "lost continent of Mu" for the stories of three revision clients. The whole sub-narrative about the priest T'yog is set there in Hazel Heald's "Out of the Eons". Similarly, the sub-narrative concerning another ancient adventurer, Bothon (in Henry S. Whitehead's story of that name), takes place in Mu. While Lovecraft may not have actually written the tale-within-a-tale about General Bothon, he did at least suggest the outline and supply the place-names used in it. Mu is just glancingly mentioned in Bishop's "Medusa's Coil", but this is worth pointing out, since this is a revision tale and Mu is not even mentioned in Lovecraft's acknowledged works.

In Lovecraft's revision work, one receives the impression that writing under another name he could "let himself go", not quite as heedful of the result as he would have been when writing under his own name. This is evident in the greater extravagance of his plotting, in the more free-wheeling style, and the occasional overeffulgence of atmospheric props and devices. The result is the unique zest and flavor of the revision tales (and, of course, the sloppy, spotty, or downright shoddy quality of a few). But at least part of Lovecraft's fun must have been in the subtle techniques he used, including those discussed here, to lead his readers a merry chase in planting false signs of authorship here and there. Lovecraft's own originality may be seen in these ingenious touches he used to lend to his revision clients a semblance of that originality which they, in the nature of the case, lacked.

²⁵See Will Murray, "Mysteries of the Hoggar Region", *Crypt of Cthulhu*, 3, No. 1 (Hallowmass 1983), 32, 39.

A Note on Lovecraft and Rupert Brooke

by Donald R. Burleson

In her reminiscences of her late former husband H. P. Lovecraft, Sonia Davis remarks, of his tastes in literature:

H. P. loved the untrodden paths and would try to find them, always seeking the weird, the uncanny and the unusual. Although he was an ardent admirer of Edgar Allan Poe I doubt whether he was entirely influenced by his works. He may have been, in his youth, but in later years he admired Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Huysmans, Pater; and Rupert Brooke was quite an idol of his.¹

Lovecraft indeed seems to have thought enough of the English poet Rupert Brooke to mention him at times in company with such figures as John Masefield, A. E. Housman, Walter de la Mare, and William Butler Yeats ("today perhaps the greatest living poet").² By common standards, much of Rupert Brooke's poetry can scarcely be said to measure up to that of, say, Yeats, and it may well be that Lovecraft's assessment of Brooke was coloured by his own Anglophilia. There is no question that Lovecraft must have been deeply stirred by Brooke's lines, in "The Soldier",

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. . . .³

Lovecraft even quotes these lines in a letter (where he places "England" in all-caps).⁴ Thus the admiration for Brooke perceived by Sonia was rather likely to have been, on Lovecraft's part, at least as much a matter of reaction to theme as to poetic quality as such.

Nevertheless, Brooke's poetry is far from being without merit, and Lovecraft may have found much in it to admire for its own sake, both in

¹Sonia H. Davis, *The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1985), p. 20.

²H. P. Lovecraft, "Suggestions for a Reading Guide", in *The Dark Brotherhood and Other Pieces* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1966), p. 41.

³Rupert Brooke, *The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke* (New York: John Lane Co., 1915), p. 111.

⁴Lovecraft, SL III.363 (to Maurice Moe, 5 April 1931).

thematic and stylistic terms. The poems contain types of imagery ranging from the delicately beautiful tone of

Tenderly, day that I have loved, I close your eyes,
And smooth your quiet brow, and fold your thin dead hands⁵

to the starkly macabre tone of

An unmeaning point upon the mud; a speck
Of moveless horror; an Immortal One
Cleansed of the world, sentient and dead; a fly
Fast-stuck in grey sweat on a corpse's neck⁶

or of lines describing embracing lovers who are dead but do not know it:

And then
They suddenly felt the wind blow cold,
And knew, so closely pressed,
Chill air on lip and breast,
And, with a sick surprise,
The emptiness of eyes.⁷

It is clear that Brooke's variegated poetry contains much that can have caught Lovecraft's fancy for one reason or another.

The question, of course, is whether one may trace any clear influence of Brooke's poetry upon Lovecraft's own work. It is quite possible—one hesitates to say "probable" in regard to not strictly provable points of influence—that Lovecraft found something worth keeping in Brooke's lines

Out of the nothingness of sleep,
The slow dreams of Eternity,
There came a thunder on the deep;
I came, because you called to me.

I broke the Night's primeval bars,
I dared the old abysmal curse,
And flashed through ranks of frightened stars
Suddenly on the universe!⁸

The similarity of all this imagery to that of Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" is obvious and striking, especially considering that Brooke's poem is even titled "The Call". Although the remaining six stanzas of the work do not bear out the initial impressions (turning the poem into one

⁵Brooke ("Day that I have Loved"), p. 23.

⁶Brooke ("The Life Beyond"), p. 67.

⁷Brooke ("Dead Men's Love"), p. 72.

⁸Brooke ("The Call"), p. 41.

which speaks of eternal lovers), the crowding of so much evocative imagery into the first eight lines produces an effect that can scarcely have been lost on Lovecraft.

We cannot read of the "nothingness of sleep", the "slow dreams of Eternity", out of which the poem's persona is called in a "thunder on the deep", without thinking of great dead-but-undead Cthulhu, lying in His watery tomb—

In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming⁹
—and awaiting the time to emerge and claim His own. The poem's persona, who "broke the Night's primeval bars" and "dared the old abysmal curse" to "flash through ranks of frightened stars" and come "suddenly on the universe", cannot but put us in mind of the sudden emergence of the octopoid high-priest Cthulhu who has been waiting for countless ages for the stars to come 'round right, waiting to "flash suddenly on the universe", frightening, no doubt, even the stars. (The "I came because you called to me" is not exactly paralleled in the story, in which it is Cthulhu who "calls". One makes the comparison *mutatis mutandis*.) Whatever Brooke's actual intentions in the poem, it is clear that the quoted lines can only have worked powerfully on Lovecraft's fecund imagination, his sense of morbid cosmicism and vast gulfs of time.

It would appear, since Sonia mentions Brooke as an "idol" of her former husband's and must have drawn most of her knowledge of his literary interests from the New York period, that at least there is little danger of any problems of chronology in thinking that Brooke's "The Call" may well have been at least something of an influence on "The Call of Cthulhu", which Lovecraft wrote in Providence in 1926 shortly after returning from his New York "exile".¹⁰ Whether this possible point of influence is real is, of course, uncertain, but it remains an interesting and not unreasonable speculation that in some germinal way, Rupert Brooke may have assisted as a midwife in the literary birth of Cthulhu.

⁹Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu", in *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1984), p. 136.

¹⁰Lovecraft sketched out the bare plot of the story while still in New York, on 12-13 August 1925, in fact; see Lovecraft's 1925 diary, ms., John Hay Library, Brown University. I am indebted to S. T. Joshi for providing me with a transcript of this document.

[Lovecraft quotes Brooke's lines from "The Soldier" in the preface to Bullen's *White Fire* (1927); rpt. Lovecraft Studies, 1, No. 1 (Fall 1979), 26. This seems to constitute the earliest mention of Brooke as yet discovered in Lovecraft's work, although earlier ones may well exist.—Ed.]

The Development of
Lovecraftian Studies, 1971-1982
(Part III)

by S. T. Joshi

II. Lovecraft Criticism

B. Critical

The most fertile and explosive advances in the study of Lovecraft have, in the last ten (and particularly the last five) years, been made in the interpretation of his work and thought. There has, however, been a curious cleavage in the critical assessment of Lovecraft, represented on the one hand by the lingering "Derlethian" tradition which (influenced in part by the de Camp biography) has adhered to traditional means of interpreting Lovecraft purely within the field of fantasy literature, and generally taking no heed of any body of his work save his fiction, and on the other hand with a bold and energetic tradition which, almost upon Derleth's death, began to challenge his interpretations and to expand its attention toward the whole of Lovecraft's work, from revisions and collaborations to poetry to essays and especially to letters, whose monumental significance in the interpretation of Lovecraft's work (not to say their own literary and philosophical merit) is now definitively established. It is hard to deny that this latter school is decidedly in the forefront of criticism, and that the former—which includes not only certain Lovecraft scholars but nearly all other commentators on Lovecraft in general literary criticism or science-fiction criticism—is merely perpetuating outmoded and on occasion erroneous views about Lovecraft the man and writer. The new trend in criticism has been restricted to a very small number of scholars, and their findings have not as yet received sufficient dissemination to make much of an impress upon criticism in general.

But of the "old" school some words must be said; since, however little it has done to advance actual scholarship, it has at least helped to spread Lovecraft's fame. Lin Carter's *Lovecraft: A Look behind the "Cthulhu Mythos"* (1972; III-C-2) is the major representative of the "old" school; and amidst its amateurish criticism, casual and "fannish" style, and adoption of certain serious misconceptions about Lovecraft's work (notably Carter's wholehearted acceptance of Derleth's interpolation of "Elder Gods" into Lovecraft's *Mythos*—on which see further below) it is now only an historical curiosity. Carter, indeed, mentioned to me that Derleth read about half the book in manuscript before his death, and Carter takes pride in the fact that it was the first book to deal entirely with Lovecraft's work—a remark, however, which must be qualified in two ways: first, over half

the volume is devoted to a survey of "Cthulhu Mythos" tales written after Lovecraft's death by other hands; and secondly, it is not certain whether Maurice Lévy's *Lovecraft ou du fantastique* (1972; III-C-17) appeared earlier or later than Carter's book. Nevertheless, no modern critic need even consult this volume any longer, as it has been totally superseded by later (and, indeed, by some earlier) studies. It is remarkable that Carter, who much earlier in his career did so much sound work in Lovecraft (his substantial if error-sprinkled "H. P. Lovecraft: The Books" [III-D-94] is still useful today), produced a volume which is so critically disappointing. But Carter was not a trained critic; nor, unfortunately, are any other members of the "old" school, although some sport Ph.Ds.

Of the three other recent volumes conforming to the Derlethian mode—John Taylor Gatto's *Monarch Note on Lovecraft* (III-C-13), Philip A. Shreffler's *H. P. Lovecraft Companion* (III-C-23), and Darrell Schweitzer's *Dream Quest of H. P. Lovecraft* (III-C-20)—little need be said. Gatto's book¹ is marred by extreme idiosyncrasy—as when he tries to shew that "The Whisperer in Darkness" is subtly pornographic—and shews an astonishingly weak grasp of the hard facts of Lovecraft's life and work.² The same may be said of Shreffler's volume, in which the author tries to make Lovecraft an occultist—presumably because the author himself has leanings in this direction. It is, however, symptomatic of how slowly the "new" criticism is reaching the critical public that the first chapter of Shreffler's book—a very superficial account of the "American Horror Tradition" and of Lovecraft's place in it—has been reprinted in Peter B. Messent's *Literature of the Occult* (Prentice-Hall, 1981; Twentieth Century Views), when many dozen better articles on Lovecraft could have been chosen.

Still less attention need be given to certain writers who have chosen to write on Lovecraft in the course of wider studies. Here we see the influence not only of Derleth and de Camp but of Colin Wilson—and not the Wilson of recent years, when he has retracted many of his harsher dicta about Lovecraft, but the early Wilson of the vitriolic *Strength to Dream*. Brian W. Aldiss, in the arrogantly titled *Billion-Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (1973; III-D-2), called Lovecraft's work "ghastly"—curiously echoing Wilson's claim that Lovecraft's style is "atrocious" (preface to *The Philosopher's Stone*). The problem with such judgments is not merely that they are arbitrary and subjective, but that the authors

¹ Large portions of this book were articles which, I believe, were written separately prior to their incorporation into the volume: Gatto's article on "Lovecraft and the Grotesque Tradition" (ch. 2) was actually published in *Nyctalops* about the time of the emergence of his book (see III-D-264), and I have a copy of the manuscript of this article and of his article on "The Whisperer in Darkness" (now part of ch. 5 of his book) which Mosig sent to me in 1976.

² The celebrated mistake was his recording the date of Lovecraft's death as 17 February 1937 instead of 15 March 1937—an error derived, incredibly, from Philip Herrera's book review in *Time* (III-F-1-4).

make not even the attempt to defend them, believing apparently that they are uttering self-evident truths. Such feeble amateurishness has been carried to its highest levels in the chapter on Lovecraft in Glen St John Barclay's *Anatomy of Horror* (1978; III-D-19), which revives Wilson's belief that Lovecraft was "sick" and maniacal. Barclay's chapter reads as if he has some personal animus against Lovecraft.

Bridging the gap between the "ancients" and the "moderns" in Lovecraft criticism are two important figures—the great French critic Maurice Lévy and his American follower, Barton L. St Armand. Both these distinguished scholars have produced substantial advances in the literary interpretation of Lovecraft's fiction, but have not had the benefit of modern discoveries into Lovecraft's life and work, since Lévy's work generally preceded the "new" school's activity and St Armand has anomalously chosen to ignore it. Lévy's *Lovecraft ou du fantastique* is a greatly revised version of his Ph.D. thesis for the Sorbonne (1969), and is still arguably the best single volume on Lovecraft; its countless keen interpretations of Lovecraft's work are little marred by a rather feeble grasp of the facts of Lovecraft's life and by his acceptance of Derleth's conception of the Mythos. Lévy is the striking example of what a brilliant critic can do when faced merely with an author's extant remains, however encrusted they are by misinterpretation. Lévy did much source study for his volume, and by exploring Lovecraft's non-fictional and (to a lesser degree) his poetic writings anticipated the modern approach. Although Lévy strongly disagreed with many of Lovecraft's philosophical views, he unhesitatingly felt that they were worth exploring as keys to the elucidation of Lovecraft's fiction and poetry. His influence has, regrettably, been restricted merely because few scholars have taken the effort to read his book; I trust that my forthcoming English translation may finally give it the attention it deserves.

But in Barton L. St Armand Lévy found a notable successor. St Armand shares with Lévy a poor understanding of Lovecraft's life,³ and augments it by adopting certain arbitrary and idiosyncratic positions which vitiate much of his work, however suggestive and enlightening in detail it remains. His first major work, the slim *Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft* (1977; III-C-19), was, I understand, virtually finished by 1971; but problems with his publishers delayed its appearance, and in the interim St Armand surprisingly neglected to take regard of the great strides in scholarship made since the book's initial writing (hence St Armand still maintains Derleth's exploded "Elder Gods"). In this book, as in its successor *H. P. Lovecraft: New England Decadent* (1975; rev. 1979; III-D-540 and Suppl.), St Armand exhibits many of his fundamental impressions about Lovecraft; it would certainly not be profitable to examine in detail either of these two rich and powerful works, but some of the author's biases and interpretations may be noted.

First, St Armand wants to see Lovecraft as an "aesthetic schizophrenic"

³As testified by the first part of his M.A. thesis on Lovecraft (1966; III-E-1-13).

in that he champions rationalism and mechanistic materialism in his life and letters but irrationalism and mysticism in his fiction. I will frankly admit that it is this view that I have been principally intent on refuting;⁴ hence I suppose I cannot represent it very fairly. But it strikes me that St Armand's deeming Lovecraft's rationalism a "pose" stems (as he in fact once mentioned to me) from the fact that he finds little interest in Lovecraft's philosophy, and cannot see how this philosophy is expressed in the fiction.⁵ I shall leave it to the reader to determine whether this is a satisfactory manner of dealing with the evidence. St Armand is, indeed, frequently very selective in his use of evidence, and tends to ignore what does not fit into his scheme and conceptions; in his *New England Decadent* volume he tried to establish that Lovecraft was a peculiar combination of French Decadence and New England Puritanism, and cited one passage from a letter which seemed to support his thesis—but he left out certain parts of it which actually controverted (or at least severely qualified) it.⁶ All this, however, does not prevent St Armand's work from being supremely interesting and important: in *Roots of Horror* there are fine discussions of details (e.g. his identification and interpretation of some epigraphs which head Lovecraft's tales; his very keen study of the symbolism in "The Rats in the Walls"; his perceptive comparisons of Lovecraft and Poe) whether or not one accepts (as I do not) his central thesis. St Armand's work can never be ignored, but because of his incomplete and idiosyncratic assessment of evidence it will always remain in need of supplementation and qualification. Perhaps a more well-rounded treatment can be expected from his forthcoming book on Lovecraft for Twayne's United States Authors Series.

The new trend in criticism, as mentioned, got underway not long after Derleth's death; and the destruction of the Derlethian edifice was begun through an attack upon Derleth's conception of the Lovecraft Mythos. This conception had, indeed, been challenged (or, rather, simply ignored) by such early scholars as Leiber, Wetzel, and Onderdonk, but its effective overthrow is the product of recent years. In essence Derleth's view can be summarised as follows:

1. Lovecraft in his fiction created two sets of extra-terrestrial and godlike forces, the "Elder Gods", or the forces of good, and

"It was this notion of St Armand's that ultimately inspired my paper on "'Reality' and Knowledge".

⁵St Armand, in *Roots of Horror*, p. 75, makes the remarkable statement that Lovecraft's "mechanistic materialist universe [was] so safe and rational, and yet so excruciatingly tedious and boring at the same time"—a striking contrast to Lovecraft's remark that "the more we learn about the cosmos, the more bewildering does it appear" (SL IV.324).

⁶See my review in *Lovecraft Studies*, 1, No. 3 (Fall 1980) 35-38.

⁷It receives its most succinct expression in the introduction to *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Arkham House, 1963), itself a revised version of chapter 3 of his *H. P. L.: A Memoir* (1945).

the "Old Ones", forces of evil, who battled continually over possession of the earth;

2. The expulsion of the Old Ones and their imprisonment in various forms paralleled the Christian mythos and the expulsion of Satan from Heaven;
3. The Old Ones can be likened to elementals;
4. Certain of Lovecraft's tales "belong" to the Mythos and others do not; more specifically, Lovecraft's tales can be cleanly segregated into the categories of "Mythos tales", "dream-world" tales, and the "New England" tales.

In the course of time every one of these views was attacked, and the foremost Lovecraft scholars do not accept any of them. Initially, however, the debate seemed to centre (or perhaps gained its symbolic significance) over the mere term "Cthulhu Mythos" or "Cthulhu Mythology". It was first noted that Lovecraft never seems to have used the term (although it was only several years later that I ascertained its earliest use by Derleth in the article "H. P. Lovecraft, Outsider" [III-D-161], published in June 1937), and this observation prompted Richard L. Tierney, so early as late 1971, to coin the term "Derleth Mythos". In a letter to the editor of *Nyctalops* for October 1971 (III-D-600), Tierney laid the foundations for his later article, "The Derleth Mythos" (III-C-12). In it he questioned the very existence of any Elder Gods in Lovecraft (and no Lovecraft text could be satisfactorily adduced to attest to their existence), and wondered whether there were any such competing entities as Derleth imagined; this established, the resulting parallelism with the Christian mythos fell through.

In order, however, definitively to disprove the Christian parallel, scholars had to come to terms with a celebrated piece of evidence which Derleth had advanced in support of his thesis—the supposed quotation from a Lovecraft letter reading "All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside, ever ready to take possession of this earth again." Again Tierney led the way. Tierney actually enquired of Derleth, shortly before his death, the precise citation of this quotation, and—as Dirk W. Mosig reported in his seminal article, "H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker" (1975; III-D-467), which, though merely following up and amplifying Tierney's conclusions, remains the pivotal article in the initiation of the new trend in criticism—Derleth reportedly became angry and refused to supply an answer. The logical inference was that the "quotation" was spurious, and invented (though not necessarily in conscious deception) to bolster Derleth's thesis.⁸ The spuriousness of this quotation, and its

⁸Indirect evidence now suggests that a passage of a Lovecraft letter to Harold Farnese may have provided the nucleus of the quotation (see note 16 to Mosig's "H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker" as reprinted in my *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* [1980], p. 112), but it is still likely

superficial similarity to an authentic utterance by Lovecraft which more closely embodies his own conception of his *Mythos*—"Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. . . . To achieve the essence of real externality, whether or time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all" (SL II.150)—was what caused the collapse of the Derlethian interpretation. Mosig then went on to deny that the Old Ones were elementals (how, for example, could Cthulhu be called a "water elemental" when he is trapped in the sunken city of R'lyeh and originated from the stars? and the correspondence of other Old Ones to elementals is even less superficially convincing), and to assert—logically enough in light of the quotation just printed—that Lovecraft's fiction is fundamentally unified philosophically. Mosig, however, could not resist lapsing into the (somewhat paradoxical) position of choosing those tales which he felt were "central" to his new conception of the *Mythos* (as Derleth and Lin Carter had done before him), although his list of twelve tales at least cut across the mutually exclusive categories established by Derleth. I now tend to regard this practise as needless save purely for convenience, especially as most commentators until recently ignored the important role of some of Lovecraft's revisions in the development of the *Mythos*; what is more, Mosig found the term "*Cthulhu Mythos*" so distasteful that he wished to substitute for it the rather awkward *Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth*. This soubriquet has (perhaps fortunately) not gained acceptance, and—although some scholars (like Robert M. Price and Will Murray) wish the retention of the term "*Cthulhu Mythos*", perhaps largely because the introduction of a new term would be more laborious than it is worth—Donald R. Burleson and I independently arrived (although I did so at the suggestion of Scott Connors) at the term *Lovecraft Mythos*,⁹ which is simple and neutral enough to serve conveniently. David E. Schultz, however, believes that any such concept or term is needless—but this position, although having much justification, seems to be an extreme reaction to the Procrustean categorisations of Derleth.

The next major step was one which was long overdue—the mere assembling of literary and biographical evidence connected with Lovecraft's life and work. It is to this task that I have devoted my major attention. So many tasks had been done inadequately or incompetently that it was merely a matter of care and diligence which led to the production and availability of large amounts of primary data essential for a detailed and comprehensive portrait of Lovecraft. My first chance in this direction came when, in 1976, the Kent State University Press gave me the opportunity of compiling a new bibliography of Lovecraft. This project took the bulk of the next

that the passage was either misquoted or twisted out of context and given a meaning foreign to Lovecraft's entire world-view.

⁹See note 52 in my *Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft*, p. 68.

four years of my career, and in the process of its compilation I asked for assistance from a world-wide array of scholars. Moreover, I was not content merely to copy information from prior bibliographies, but recompiled every bit of information from original sources and personal examination. The result was that I and my colleagues unearthed hundreds of works by and about Lovecraft hitherto unknown and unrecorded; in particular I completely revised the list of Lovecraft's important early publications in the amateur journals, while Dirk W. Mosig and I produced the first comprehensive list of Lovecraftiana in foreign languages. I was initially intending to include a catalogue of manuscripts,¹⁰ but found that such a listing would prove too bulky in an already bulky volume. I may yet compile such a listing.

The coincident emergence of the Necronomicon Press allowed me to issue several important compilational works whose market potential to other firms might have been problematical. Michaud and I first compiled a collection of letters by and about Lovecraft in the letter column of *Weird Tales* magazine (Suppl.), then followed it up with the more significant compilation of a listing of Lovecraft's personal library (Suppl.). This latter volume has cleared up several puzzling details about Lovecraft's use of literary sources in his work and has opened avenues for much more extensive work in literary and philosophical influences upon Lovecraft. My index to the *Selected Letters* has already been noted, and its success has led me to compile another index, this time of proper names in his fiction and poetry.¹¹

A second goal of my own work, in part parallel to the desire to provide the necessary source materials for more precise work in Lovecraft studies, has been the repeated attempt to take Lovecraft away from the world of fantasy fandom and to establish him definitively in the broader world of scholarly literary criticism. This was actually my primary goal in compiling what eventually became the anthology *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1980; III-C-16), begun in 1975.¹² I chose from the start to try to interest a university press in the publication of this volume, and not to relegate it to one of any number of fan presses which would have expressed an interest in the book. In this undertaking I eventually (albeit laboriously) succeeded, although another of my goals for the volume—the depiction of the history of Lovecraft criticism from the 1940s to the present, and not necessarily a selection of what I thought were the best articles on Lovecraft written up to that time—was not always understood by reviewers. Nevertheless, I seem to have succeeded partially in

¹⁰The omission of such a listing has been remarked upon by some reviewers: R. Boerem in *Lovecraft Studies*; Steve Eng in *The Romantist*, 1980-81.

¹¹Necronomicon Press, forthcoming. The index will apply to the old edition of Lovecraft's fiction.

¹²For a volume somewhat similar in conception but unfortunately limited by publication in the fan press, see Darrell Schweitzer's *Essays Lovecraftian* (1976; III-C-21). A revised edition is in production from Star-mont House.

alerting the critical world to Lovecraft's existence—if the surprisingly lengthy review of the *Four Decades* by S. S. Prawer in the *Times Literary Supplement* for 19 June 1981 is any indication.

This goal was at the heart of my foundation of *Lovecraft Studies*. As early as 1977 Dirk Mosig, Marc A. Michaud, and I had discussed the establishment of such an outlet for the increasing scholarly output devoted to Lovecraft—output which was increasingly out of place in the "fan" magazines of the fantasy and science-fiction field; but our plans at that time came to nothing. It was only in the spring of 1979 that Michaud and I (Mosig by this time having abandoned the field) revived the idea, and in autumn the first issue rather timidly emerged. Since then it has received increasingly wider notice and is being purchased by an increasing number of university libraries.

Mosig and I were for a time the leaders, first in the battle against the Derlethian view of the Mythos, and then in the establishment of a strong foundation for scholarly work in Lovecraft. Shortly thereafter, however, other scholars joined in and began leading Lovecraft studies into exciting new channels through more comprehensive treatments of the whole body of his work and through innovative angles of interpretation. The most dynamic new force is Donald R. Burleson. Burleson began by doing extensive work in the topographical and historical sources for some of Lovecraft's New England tales; and the results of his tireless journeys across the face of New England were embodied in a brilliant article, "Humour beneath Horror: Some Sources for 'The Dunwich Horror' and 'The Whisperer in Darkness'" (Suppl.). Increased attention to advanced techniques of literary criticism led Burleson to further breakthroughs, especially in the comprehensive treatment of Hawthorne's influence upon Lovecraft and, most excitingly, a complete revision of the standard interpretation of "The Dunwich Horror" through the employment of myth criticism ("The Mythic Hero Archetype in 'The Dunwich Horror'").¹³ In a certain sense Burleson has followed St Armand in the interpretation of Lovecraft in terms of imagery, symbolism, and style, but has done so far more perspicaciously through a comprehensive knowledge of Lovecraft's philosophical thought and its relations to his work. Burleson has now consolidated his thoughts on Lovecraft in a landmark volume, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* (Greenwood Press, 1983).

In the more purely philosophical realm certain interesting strides were made by Paul Buhle, in "Dystopia as Utopia" (III-D-80), in which he studied Lovecraft's place in social and intellectual history. Buhle—as any commentator on the philosophical thought of Lovecraft must—built upon the foundations laid by the early work of Matthew H. Onderdonk (III-D-490 to 492), a pioneer in this field; and I have myself attempted to elaborate some of Onderdonk's conclusions in certain essays. What is needed now is a comprehensive treatment of Lovecraft's philosophy as such—as I attempted in very brief compass to do in the first chapter of my *Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft* (1982); for before the details of his metaphysical, ethical,

¹³*Lovecraft Studies*, 1, No. 4 (Spring 1981) 3-9.

political, and aesthetic thought are worked out, there shall always be imprecision as to the exact relationship between Lovecraft's work and his thought. In a slightly different direction, the prolific Robert M. Price has with great success shed light on some aspects of Lovecraft's work from the point of view of his own discipline, the history of religion. In his first article, "Higher Criticism and the *Necronomicon*",¹⁴ he shewed how Lovecraft's mythical tome could be better explicated using the method of "higher criticism" as was applied in the nineteenth century to biblical studies. In a similar vein is a recent and brilliant contribution, "De-mythologizing Cthulhu",¹⁵ examining the Lovecraft Mythos again from the standpoint of mythic and religious criticism. This article may actually cause a certain revolution in Lovecraft studies, as its clear establishment that Lovecraft himself "demythologised" the gods of his Mythos (i.e. himself intimated in later tales that the gods are merely myths distortedly veiling scientific truths) may force us to revise our notions of the interplay between Lovecraft's philosophy and his fiction. But Price's work is of a very wide-ranging character: at times he has attempted to question certain details of Tierney's and Mosig's destruction of the "Derleth Mythos",¹⁶ at other times he has explored the details of Lovecraft's fiction—and particularly the Mythos—far more closely than previous commentators.¹⁷ This legacy of precision, handed down by such scholars as Faig and Mosig, can still bear much greater fruit.

The quest for producing a comprehensive understanding of Lovecraft has led in recent years to the resurrection and explication of lesser bodies of his work. In particular, modern scholars of the Lovecraft Mythos, having been forced to examine his revisions and collaborations for details concerning the Mythos, are discovering that these works are either of substantial literary merit ("The Mound", "Out of the Eons", "The Night Ocean") or are at least full of interesting matter. Correspondingly, increasing attention has been paid to unearthing "lost" or previously unattributed revisions by Lovecraft. Mosig began the trend by discovering "The Night ocean"; Kenneth W. Faig and I unearthed the Lovecraft-Eddy collaboration "Ashes"; I found Lovecraft's revisory hand in Henry S. Whitehead's "The Trap", while William Fulwiler deduced that Lovecraft had at least a certain hand in the conception of Whitehead's "Bothon";¹⁸ most recently, Scott Connors, Robert M. Price, and I laboriously discovered the text of Duane

¹⁴Lovecraft Studies, 2, No. 1 (Spring 1982) 3-13.

¹⁵Lovecraft Studies, 2, No. 3 (Spring 1983) 3-9, 24.

¹⁶See his "Lovecraft-Derleth Connection", Lovecraft Studies, 2, No. 2 (Fall 1982) 18-23 (where I have added a rebuttal).

¹⁷See the many articles in his own entertaining publication, *Crypt of Cthulhu*.

¹⁸On precise details of attribution see my article, "Lovecraft's Revisions: How Much of Them Did He Write?", *Crypt of Cthulhu*, 2, No. 3 (Candilemas 1983) 3-14.

W. Rimel's "The Tree on the Hill", which Lovecraft revised; Price also determined that Rimel's "The Disinterment" was almost entirely ghost-written by Lovecraft.

Conversely, certain works generally attributed to Lovecraft have, after closer examination, been found to be spurious. The greatest efforts in this regard were again by Mosig, who definitively removed the "Lovecraft-Derleth posthumous collaborations" from consideration, since Lovecraft's hand in them in nearly every instance proved to be of the slightest; this discovery, although receiving a sort of canonisation in my bibliography, has not spread beyond the central core of Lovecraft scholars, and publishers continue to reprint the tales under Lovecraft's lucrative name. Of lesser discoveries can be ranked the discrediting by David E. Schultz, Mosig, and myself of the so-called "Complete Chronology" of tales printed (and in fact fabricated) by Derleth as by Lovecraft; the fragment "The Thing in the Moonlight", which Schultz discovered was compiled by J. Chapman Miske; the two poems, "Death" and "To the American Flag", which Mosig and I, respectively, discovered were written by Jonathan E. Hoag; and a few other items.¹⁹ Probably few other apocryphal works remain in the Lovecraft corpus, although many more unknown revisions (particularly of works other than fiction) may be found in the coming years.

Lovecraft's poetry has still not garnered the attention it merits, in spite of a few very keen commentators. No one (save perhaps the over-zealous Mosig) would contend that this is a brilliant or even especially significant body of work, but Lovecraft did consider himself primarily a poet during his early years, and the many influences upon his poetry—from the Greek and Latin poets to the poets of Augustan England and of the later Victorian age—have yet to be noted in any sort of detail. R. Boerem wrote two articles (both in III-C-16) which might perhaps initiate new interest in Lovecraft's poetry, although to date only David E. Schultz has done any further work; but Schultz's forthcoming annotated edition of the *Fungi from Yuggoth* should prove to be a landmark. Part of the reason for the ignorance of Lovecraft's poetry has merely been its inaccessibility, in spite of such a volume as *A Winter Wish*; many poems have yet to be rescued from the crumbling and scarce amateur journals of the 1910s and 1920s in which they first appeared.

A similar fate has overtaken Lovecraft's essays, which in sheer bulk dwarf the fiction twice over. Although *To Quebec and the Stars*—the first volume devoted solely to Lovecraft's essays—was an auspicious venture, it has not gained followers save, in a minor way, in my own *Uncollected Prose and Poetry* volumes. A significant body of Lovecraft's non-fiction remains unpublished, and legal disputes may prevent its appearance for some time. Lovecraft's voluminous writings on amateur journalism matters—and the equally voluminous replies by other writers which they inspired—are a fertile and untouched area for anyone wishing definitively to map Lovecraft's long and extensive involvement in amateur letters.

¹⁹See my bibliography under "Apocrypha and Other Miscellany".

It could well be said that the publication of the *Selected Letters* made the emergence of the new trend of criticism possible, at least in its earlier stages. This series immediately established itself as an indispensable reference tool, and Lovecraft scholars can as easily do without it as Lucretian scholars can do without the extant fragments of Epicurus. As remarked earlier, there are certainly flaws in the editing of these volumes—perhaps the most significant being the abridgement, sometimes extensive, of nearly every one of the 930 letters included in the series. Unfortunately, Lovecraft's complete correspondence may not only require generations of editing but would fill up to 100 volumes; and it will require a bold (not to say unoccupied) editor to undertake or even begin the task. That such a task may be the most urgent (or at least most important) duty in Lovecraft studies can be hinted by the fact that several scholars now regard Lovecraft's correspondence not only as his most important work (certainly from a biographical and philosophical standpoint) but even his most literarily brilliant. The real literary genius of Lovecraft emerges in these letters, written spontaneously and without preparation—letters more full of wit, erudition, and stylistic virtuosity than whole novels or philosophical treatises. Perhaps supplementary volumes of letters can be issued periodically, although again legal squabbles will cause possibly insuperable complications.

In conclusion I should make note of my own work in Lovecraft textual studies, and my corresponding plan to edit Lovecraft's *Collected Works* (excluding correspondence) in 13 volumes. I would never have imagined the need for a new edition of Lovecraft had I not, at the insistence of Dirk W. Mosig and Scott Connors, begun in early 1977 to make random examinations into the textual soundness of Lovecraft's works (especially the fiction) published by Arkham House. To my horror, I discovered that severe corruptions had entered into many of the texts, and that—thanks to the providential preservation of many of Lovecraft's manuscripts by R. H. Barlow—it would be possible to restore them to a form not far different from what Lovecraft had desired. Once the task of correction was begun, however, I saw no point in stopping there; my training in classical textual studies led me to explore the whole textual tradition and transmission of Lovecraft's works, and my coincident work on the Lovecraft bibliography led me to unearth and collect hundreds of lost and forgotten articles and poems by Lovecraft. All my goals in Lovecraft studies—the desire to see Lovecraft gain recognition in the broader world of general literary scholarship; the desire to lay a solid foundation for future Lovecraft work; the need to gain a comprehensive impression of Lovecraft through examination of his entire output—led gradually to my decision to begin the *Collected Works*, which will include a full textual apparatus and extensive critical commentary. A project of this scope cannot be done singly, and I have enlisted the aid of all leading Lovecraft scholars in the edition. Although it has no publisher and not even a projected date for the appearance of the first volume, a preliminary glimpse of it may be provided by David E. Schultz's brilliant forthcoming edition of Lovecraft's *Commonplace Book*.

(Necronomicon Press). This volume—clearly the best annotated edition of any work by Lovecraft to date—has received the assistance of many scholars; although, of course, the primary work is Schultz's.

My initial discovery of the corruptions in Lovecraft's printed texts caused a certain agitation amongst scholars, and is now even infiltrating the foreign press. Giuseppe Lippi took brief note of my work in a new preface to the Italian *Opere Complete* (1978); and when I announced my findings at the Fifth World Fantasy Convention in autumn 1979, Kalju Kirde approached me with some alarm and asked what should be done about the translation of these corrupt texts. I was, however, unable to provide Kirde with my corrections in time for them to affect his recent German editions of Lovecraft, but I have supplied corrected texts for Franz Rottensteiner's recent edition of Lovecraft's revisions in German. My texts have also served as the basis for Masaki Abe's ten-volume edition of Lovecraft in Japanese, and a new Italian translation of Lovecraft's stories may materialise under the direction of Claudio de Nardi and Gianfranco de Turris. It may perhaps be hoped that the French will undertake to provide new translations of Lovecraft's major work and thus replace the already inadequate Jacques Papy translations of the 1950s.

The state of Lovecraft studies is, therefore, still in an exciting ferment, although the general trend toward precision and all-encompassing assessment remains constant. Enormous tasks loom for the Lovecraft scholars of the future, and in the course of time Lovecraft will take his place with other acknowledged writers of our time. Small indications are already pointing in this direction—the inclusion of Lovecraft in the 15th edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* (1980); the separate entry on Lovecraft in the 15th edition of the *Encyclopaedia*; the intelligent and appreciative mentions of Lovecraft in such scholarly works as Jack Sullivan's *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from LeFanu to Blackwood* (Ohio University Press, 1978) and R. D. Stock's *The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake* (Princeton University Press, 1982). But such a transformation does not occur instantaneously, and there will still be a sort of "jet-lag" where modern Lovecraft scholars will be probing depths far beyond that imagined by the general literary world. At the moment it appears that the major brunt of advanced Lovecraft studies is being borne by only a handful of scholars; but Lovecraft's increasing critical reputation will, in the course of time, attract new scholars whose united efforts will grant Lovecraft and his work the place it deserves in modern literature and thought. It is not too much to hope that that placement may not be long forthcoming.

Dagon in Puritan Massachusetts

by Will Murray

One of the puzzling things about H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos is the inclusion of what Lovecraft called "the ancient Philistine legend of Dagon, the Fish-God",¹ among a pantheon that included such fictitious entities as Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Nug and Yeb. This anomaly might be laid to Lovecraft's predilection for retroactively incorporating non-Mythos elements culled from his earlier fiction into his later fiction, an activity that seems to have become chronic in 1930, with "The Whisperer in Darkness". In that story, concepts from other writers—both antecedents and contemporaries of Lovecraft—are slipped into the text in a way that suggests meaning, although this may really be a combination of atmospherics and playfulness on the author's part.

Thus, when Lovecraft introduced the Esoteric Order of Dagon in "The Shadow over Innsmouth", it automatically tied his 1917 pre-Mythos story, "Dagon", into the main body of his work. Dagon, portrayed as a gargantuan proto-Cthulhu in Lovecraft's early story of horror in the North Sea, is not directly connected to his later novelette of a strange cult in a Massachusetts coastal town. The Esoteric Order of Dagon, according to that story, was "a debased, quasi-pagan thing imported from the East a century before",² when Captain Obed Marsh brought his non-human wife home with him from the South Seas. Dagon is linked with Cthulhu worship in this story, where he is called "Father Dagon".³

According to Robert M. Price, in his article "The Real Father Dagon",⁴ Dagon may be nothing more than another name under which the ancients worshipped Cthulhu. Price points out that Dagon worship was often mentioned in derogatory fashion in the Bible, pointing specifically to Samson's destruction of the temple of Dagon in the Book of Judges and the destruction of a statue of Dagon by the Ark of the Covenant. He also explodes the popular belief that Dagon was a kind of merman god, although it is a belief that has persisted for centuries. But the question remains: where did Lovecraft pick up on the idea of Dagon?

Of course, the Bible is a likely source. Lovecraft was certainly familiar with it in detail.⁵ Then there was Herbert S. Gorman's novel of

¹Lovecraft, *Dagon* (1965), p. 7.

²Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror* (1984), p. 312. ³*Ibid.*, p. 337.

⁴Crypt of Cthulhu, 2, No. 1 (Hallowmass 1982), 23-24. The article appeared under a Price pseudonym, Harold Hadley Copeland.

⁵Note that Zadok Allen's reference to Dagon in "The Shadow over Inns-

witchcraft in western Massachusetts, *The Place Called Dagon* (1927). But Lovecraft could not have read this novel in 1917. The probable answer is more obscure, and that makes it doubly interesting.

In actual fact, Dagon may enter the Mythos through the back door of Lovecraft's so-called New England tales, and not because of any attempt to subsume his earlier fiction under a single thematic umbrella. For alone of all the entities of the Mythos, Dagon was a presence in the early days of Lovecraft's beloved Colonies.

I live in the city of Quincy, Massachusetts, only a ten-minute walk from Moswetuset Hummock, where Miles Standish landed, and the seat of the Massachusetts Indians, who gave their name to this state. At the opposite end of Quincy Bay lies Merrymount, now a small hilly park, but formerly a settlement of some notoriety after a certain Captain Wollaston discovered it, established a settlement there, and then abandoned it. After Wollaston departed for Jamestown, Virginia, in 1627, a member of the settlement named Thomas Morton, a lawyer and adventurer of ill repute, usurped command of the settlement, then known as Mount Wollaston, and renamed it Merry Mount. But to avoid offending the Pilgrims of Plymouth to the south, he pretended it was spelled Ma-re Mount, meaning "Mountain by the Sea".⁶

Morton and his people eschewed contact with fellow settlers in favor of cohabiting with the Indians, to whom he sold liquor and firearms, much to the horror of the other settlers. The Merry Mount settlement—it was not much more than a fur trading post—became famous for its licentiousness and anarchy. Morton crowned himself the "Lord of Misrule",⁷ and on May Day, 1627, he and the local Indians erected an eighty-foot garlanded pine, topped with the spread antlers of a buck. This was the infamous maypole around which they danced and got drunk, as celebrated in Nathaniel Hawthorne's story, "The Maypole of Merry Mount". Dancing around the maypole had been a Druidic custom.

The paganistic nature of life on Merry Mount so scandalized the right-thinking Puritans that they took to calling it by an insulting name, one which was inspired, no doubt, by Biblical accounts of the Philistines and their idolatry. As Lovecraft once noted, "The old Puritans always had their eyes open for Biblical analogies, & drew briefly on Holy Writ for their local & personal nomenclature."⁸

They called Merry Mount, instead, "Mounte-Dagon".⁹

It was a name that might never have been recorded for posterity, but for the fact that the Indians to whom Morton had sold drink and weapons began to commit murder, which outraged outlying settlers. Those in Plymouth

mouth", is spoken in the same breath as a flurry of Biblical references (p. 334 of *The Dunwich Horror*).

⁶William Churchill Edwards, *Historic Quincy Massachusetts* (Quincy: City of Quincy, 1954), p. 25.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Lovecraft, *Selected Letters IV* (1976), p. 259.

⁹Daniel Munro Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of Quincy* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1926), p. 10.

tried to reason with Morton, but he rebuffed them. So they sent Miles Standish and a company of eight men to take him by force. Morton was shipped back to Great Britain. After he was gone, Governor John Endicott, who had been granted the patent to the Company of Massachusetts Bay—which included Mount Wollaston—sailed down to what would later be Quincy Bay to take control over the remaining settlers.

The first thing Endicott did was to cut down the pagan maypole. The second thing was to lecture the settlers to leave off their pagan ways. As a way of shaming them, he renamed Merry Mount, officially giving it the name and spelling of Mount Dagon.¹⁰

It is not recorded what effect the name had on the people of Merry Mount, but without Thomas Morton they were gradually assimilated into the Colonial mainstream. And although Morton later returned to Massachusetts, he was arrested for certain illegal activities including the writing of an "unfriendly book"¹¹ (his *New English Canaan*) and died, aged and half mad, a broken man.

In time, with the blight obliterated, the name Mount Dagon was dropped and the hill again became known as Merry Mount, today spelled Merrymount.

But that was not the end of Dagon in Massachusetts. As a symbol for New World paganism and license it seems to have survived. Evidences of Dagonism—to give this nebulous phenomenon a name—can be found at the Copp's Hill Burying Ground, literally around the corner from the former site of the studio of Richard Upton Pickman, in Boston's spectral North End. Amid the tombstones, most of which date to the 1600s and 1700s, are a few in which the usual death's head or cherub carvings are absent. A few stones, now worn and cracked by time, depict actual carvings of Dagon—that is, of the popular conception of Dagon as a half-man, half-fish.

These particular stones date over fifty years after the time of Mount Dagon, but have not been linked to the Mount Dagon incidents except by supposition. According to Allan I. Lunwig, these stones are all the work of a single unknown stone-carver who signed his work with the initials J. N. and who "was the first New England carver to use . . . the enigmatic Dagons or Tritons which ornament his most representative stones".¹² Lunwig goes on to say that "The use of Dagons on Puritan gravestones is puzzling in the light of the fact that they were associated with paganism and the evil doings of Thomas Morton and his merrymen. . . . Yet pagan Dagons remained to grace the stone of many a proper Boston family in the late 17th century in spite of the Mount Dagon incident some years before."¹³

A much earlier scholar, Harriet Merrifield Forbes, does not call these images Dagons, but instead speculates that they are intended to evoke the duality of Christ, or may be sirens, whom she describes as "messengers of Proserpina, whose duty it was to carry the souls of the departed to Hades."¹⁴ Despite the fact that the people of the day "moved in a world

¹⁰Edwards, p. 27.

¹¹Wilson, p. 16.

¹²Allan I. Lunwig, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and Its Symbols, 1650-1815* (Middleton: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1966), p. 298.

¹³Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁴Harriett Merrifield Forbes, *Gravestones*

peopled with Biblical characters" and that these were often coupled with "marvelous creatures of the Pagan world",¹⁵ the Dagon connection seems to have eluded her.

Forbes does note, however, that she has discovered fourteen of these mystifying carvings, "of which eleven are in Boston, one in Dorchester, one in West Roxbury, and one in Portsmouth New Hampshire; this last, however, was erected by a Boston man."¹⁶ She also notes a child's tomb that "features a tiny mermaid rising up behind the inscribed tablet".¹⁷ In short, these carvings are a highly localized phenomenon, limited to Boston, which abuts Quincy.

I have found eight stones marked with Dagons in Boston. The Granary Burying Ground contains four, those of Benjamin Hills, who died in 1683, Jacob Elliott (d. 1693), Asaph Eliot (d. 1685), and the infant baby of Mungo Crawford (d. 1688). Four stones can be found on Copp's Hill. Those of Michael Martyn (d. 1682), William Greenough (d. 1693), Matthew Pittom (d. 1693/94) and the undatable stone of John Briggs. With the exception of the infant's stone, the designs all follow the same pattern: two Dagons, often winged, with long, feathery tails framing an ornate vase or urn. The winged death's heads so common to old New England headstones sometimes hover above. Some of these Dagons are female.

No one knows why Dagon images are carved on certain stones, but the accepted wisdom is that they are representations of Dagon, and not mermen or whatever, although they are sometimes referred to as Tritons and the female versions as Nereids. Lunwig seems to suggest that these may be the headstones of some of Morton's followers, and that these stones bear the symbol of their wild youth as a mark of shame on the order of Hester Prynne's scarlet "A".

It is possible, one supposes, that some of Morton's followers continued practicing, in secret, some of the ways of Mount Dagon, and they arranged to have images of Dagon carved on their headstones as a gesture of pride, or to insult the Puritans. No one knows what became of Morton's crew. Even their names, with two exceptions, have been lost to history.¹⁸

But this theory is not supported by what we know of Benjamin Hills, for instance, who died at the age of 23, and Matthew Pittom, dead at nineteen, and the infant, dead at nineteen weeks. All were too young to have lived on Mount Dagon. Captain William Greenough and Jacob Elliott, both of whom died in August 1693 of a fever brought to Boston from the West Indies by ship, likewise could not have dallied with Morton's crew. Greenough was born in 1641, over ten years after the incidents at the infamous mount, and Elliott was a church deacon. In fact, none of the headstones I have been able to date—some have been ruined by weather and vandalism—belong

of *Early New England* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), p. 122.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸According to *Three Hundred Years of Quincy*, Captain Edward Gibbons and Walter Bagnall were the only Mount Dagonites whose later lives caused their names to be recorded for posterity.

to people who were alive at the time of Mount Dagon's heyday.

Then what is the explanation for this? Could these be the children of Morton's former band? Or is there some significance to the period of these deaths? Every tombstone bearing an image of Dagon belonged to someone who died in the ten-year period between 1683 and 1693—the period of the Salem witch trials, if that means anything. Or perhaps the answer lies not with the deceased but with the stone carver, as Harriet Merrifield Forbes suggests. Of the mysterious J. N. she wrote: "Either he had a greater stock of imagination than any other contemporary stonemason, or he had different sources of inspiration. Did he have some other vocation where scrolls, arabesques, unusual plants, and strange beings took him out of the beaten paths of gravestone ornamentation into fields of fancy?"¹⁹

Could J. N. have been a former member of Morton's band, who were supposed to number only seven? Was his very name suppressed for that reason? Could he have inscribed images of Dagon on the stones of respectable Bostonians as a subtle form of Puritan-baiting? The matter remains a mystery. But a link between the Dagon stones and Mount Dagon remains a tantalizing if inexplicable possibility.

The legends that arose from Mount Dagon no doubt reached H. P. Lovecraft's ears (and very likely inspired Gorman's *The Place Called Dagon* as well). Lovecraft was certainly familiar with the story of Thomas Morton, inasmuch as he mentions "Thomas Morton of Merrymount" in a letter to Wilfred Blanch Talman dated March 24, 1931.²⁰ Lovecraft may even have visited the site of the former Mount Dagon during his brief visit to Quincy in the thirties. And during his summer 1926 visit to the North End, it is very likely that he noticed the representations of Dagon on the headstones at Copp's Hill Burying Ground. If not, it would have been a terrible irony for him to have missed them!

One steeped in Lovecraftian lore could, I suppose, postulate an interesting thesis to explain all this. That Thomas Morton was the first Cthulhu worshipper in the New World, that the maypole was the focal point of contact between Colonial New England and the Old Ones, and that the Dagonism, whose centuries-old imprint can still be found in certain Boston burial grounds, eventually migrated north to Innsmouth in the form of the Esoteric Order of Dagon. But this is concoction. History tells us that Dagon's shadow fell across Massachusetts almost from the beginning of the Colonial period and remained a dark presence for at least fifty years. Surely Lovecraft, himself steeped in the lore of old New England, with his fascination with the darker backwaters of that lore, was familiar with at least some of this history and it inspired him in his resurrection of the half-forgotten Philistine god, Dagon.

¹⁹Forbes, p. 37.

²⁰Lovecraft, *Selected Letters III* (1971), p. 349.

Instructions in Case of Death

by H. P. Lovecraft

All files of weird magazines, scrap books not wanted by A. E. P. G. and all original mss. to R. H. Barlow, my literary executive.

Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (in drawer of big black walnut bookcase) to go to James F. Morton, Paterson Museum, Paterson, N.J.

All publications connected with amateur journalism to Edwin Hadley Smith, 235 Emerson St. N.W., Washington, D.C.

Of all other articles first choice to be had by A. E. P. Gamwell.

File of *Farmer's Almanacks* to W. Paul Cook, 1305 Missouri Ave., E. St. Louis, Ill.

Books of general English literature, after preceding choices—poetry, essays, eighteenth-century memoirs, &c.—to be chosen by Rheinhart Kleiner, 116 Harmon St., Brooklyn, N.Y.

After the preceding, first choice of all books, pictures, curios, and other articles to be had by R. H. Barlow.

Second choice to be had by Clark Ashton Smith, Box 385, Auburn, California. All weird cuttings to Mr. Smith.

Communication with the following to see if they would care for any residual books, curios, pictures, &c.

Duane W. Rimel	1109 Chestnut St., Charleston, Wash.
R. F. Searight	11946 Darby Ave., Detroit, Michigan
Donald Wandrei	1152 Portland Ave., St. Paul, Minn.
August W. Derleth T. Kemp Bordley, Jr.	Sauk City, Wis. Chestertown, Md. (chemical books)
James F. Morton	Paterson, N.J. (Americana)
Kenneth Sterling	A-11 Lionel Hall, Cambridge, Mass. (Science)
E. Hoffmann Price	Route 2—Box 100 Redwood City, California
Miss Elizabeth Toldridge	The La Salle, Washington, D.C.

Samuel Loveman	Bodley Book Shop, 104 Fifth Ave., N. Y. City
F. B. Long, Jr.	230 W. 97th St., N. Y. City
Fritz Leiber, Jr.	459 N. Oakhurst Drive, Beverly Hills, California

Catalogues of the weird part of my library may be found on the shelves at the right of my table.

Harry O. Fischer	Gen. Box Co. Louisville, Ky.
Harry Brobst	61 Beacon Ave. Prov., R.I.
C. W. Smith	408 Groveland St., Haverhill, Mass.
E. A. Edkins	San Sebastian Hotel Coral Gables, Florida
Bernard Dwyer	Box 43, W. Shokan, N.Y.
Richard E. Morse	40 Princeton Ave., Princeton, N.J.
M. W. Moe	1043 N. 22nd St. Milwaukee, Wis.
H. C. Koenig	540 E. 80th St., N. Y. City
Robert Bloch	620 E. Knapp St., Milwaukee, Wis.
J. Vernon Shea, Jr.	4779 Liberty Ave., Pittsburgh, Penn.
William Lumley	792 William St., Buffalo, N.Y.
W. B. Talman	Scotland Post Road Spring Valley, N.Y.

Mrs. D. W. Bishop, 5001 Sunset Drive, Kansas City, Ms., owed H. P. Lovecraft \$26 for revision work.

Copy of *Amazing Stories*, Aug. 1936, also envelope full of loose sheets of Weinbaum stories, to Kenneth Sterling, A-11 Lionel Hall, Cambridge, Mass. MSS. of Polynesian folklore with pictures—E. L. Sechrist, Box 191, Papeeti, Tahiti.

Miss Margaret Sylvester	612 W. 115th St., N. Y. City
Willis Conover	27 High St., Cambridge, Maryland

Arthur Leeds	161 Lexington Ave., N. Y. City
Miss C. L. Moore	2547 Brookside Pkwy. Indianapolis, Ind.
Henry Kuttner	145 S. Canon Dr. #3 Beverly Hills, Cal.
Eugene B. Kuntz	Box 736 Clovis, New Mexico
Woodburn Harris	Route 1 Vergennes, Vt.
Adolphe de Castro	1732 S. Catalina St. Los Angeles, Cal.
Virgil Finlay	302 Rand St. Rochester, N.Y.

Open all letters and write (offering books &c.) to those who seem to be logical recipients.

If any of the small fantasy magazines ask for an obituary notice, or if any individuals like Price or Barlow request data for reminiscent articles, the enclosed manuscript <"Some Notes on a Nonentity"> might serve as a model or source. The best small magazine to carry such a thing is that published by Willis Conover, Jun., 27 High St., Cambridge, Maryland (the boy who sent me the skull).

My new bookplate—a colonial doorway typifying both the general atmosphere of Old Providence and my especial antiquarian tastes. Designed by my young friend Wilfred B. Talman of Spring Valley, N.Y.

My antiquarian postcard collection might be of interest to either Henry Kuttner or Miss C. L. Moore or both (addresses elsewhere).

Reviews

SONIA H. DAVIS. *The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft*. West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1985. v, 25 pp. \$3.95 pb. Reviewed by Peter Cannon.

Lovecraftians should welcome this first publication of the complete Sonia Davis memoir, as she originally wrote it. While the reader may be disconcerted initially by the crudeness of the style (it is a little shocking to realize that Mrs. H. P. Lovecraft was so poor a writer!), he cannot help but be moved and delighted by its content. For those keen on fresh anecdotes, here are such tidbits left out of the abridged version in *Something about Cats* as Lovecraft's reciting from O'Neill's *Emperor Jones* in "excellent Negro dialect", acting out part of *Richard III* with James Morton, exploring a hidden cemetery in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, and removing ingrown hairs in his beard with tweezers.

From this narrative in its raw form, too, one gets a stronger sense of Mrs. Davis's concern to answer certain points in Paul Cook's memoir, to speak forthrightly about Lovecraft's racism, and to emphasize her significant financial support of him. Many familiar stories now include more specific detail. When she chided Lovecraft for showing so much affection to a mere cat, we learn that it wasn't just "the cat" he kept on stroking but "Felis". Charmingly she refers to him most often as "H.P." (rarely as Howard), the reverse of the earlier, edited versions.

Out of this rambling and repetitious account by the woman who loved Lovecraft comes a tragicomic portrait of her doomed effort to domesticate one of literature's most inveterate bachelors. Naive and romantic, she made the classic mistake of trying to transform into a good husband a man too set in his own peculiar ways to change. In turn rueful, affectionate, bitter, wistful, she chronicles in haphazard order the haphazard course of their relationship, from their introduction at an amateur press gathering in Boston in 1921 to their final poignant meeting in Farmington in 1932. Writing more than ten years after Lovecraft's death, when she was happily remarried, Mrs. Davis speaks with admirable candor and reasonable objectivity of difficult events; describing with dignity the indignities she suffered. However understandable his behavior, Lovecraft did treat her shabbily, evading the issue by running home to Providence, protesting his willingness to keep their marital bond alive while setting impossible conditions.

To Lovecraft's credit, for all his theories about hating inferior peoples, as a practical matter he readily fell in love with a woman who was far from his racial ideal. Whatever her role in indirectly contributing to his maturation as a writer, Lovecraftians should be especially grateful to Madame Greene for bringing out a human side of Lovecraft that renders him more deserving of our sympathy. Failure of the marriage may have been

inevitable, but both parties did try honestly to make it work; and had Lovecraft's professional writing career not taken such a disastrous turn right after their wedding the outcome may well have been less unhappy.

"The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft" is a felicitous choice of title by the editors,¹ who have done a real service in making this invaluable and unique document available to the general fan in such an attractive format. Kudos also to artist Jason Eckhardt for his splendid wraparound cover depicting a rearview of Howard and Sonia strolling arm in arm along gaslit Benefit Street, while the shade of Poe (a puddle shows no reflection) lurks on the opposite sidewalk.

¹ [The title is Sonia's.—Ed.]

RICHARD A. LUPOFF, comp. *Lovecraft's Book*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1985. ix, 260 pp. \$15.95 hc. Reviewed by S. T. Joshi.

In the ten years following the appearance of L. Sprague de Camp's *Lovecraft: A Biography* and Willis Conover's *Lovecraft at Last* little advance has been made in the probing of Lovecraft's life. His surviving friends seem to have told us all they know; and it is left to independent scholars to ferret out what secrets they can from extant written sources. It is just this sort of research that Richard A. Lupoff has conducted in unearthing a spectacular but hitherto completely unknown series of events in which Lovecraft became involved in 1927. The Freedom of Information Act allowed Lupoff to have access to now declassified papers concerning Lovecraft's embroilment with a Nazi plan for the overthrow, both moral and military, of the United States.

This plan, masterminded by Kurt Lüdecke, a close associate of Hitler's, would have involved Lovecraft's writing a treatise, *New America and the Coming World Order*, expounding Lovecraft's views on Aryan supremacy and the need to preserve the racial purity of the nation. But the writing of this book—which, coming from one of untainted old American ancestry, would carry much greater weight than if written by a German-American or, worse still, some member of an alien stock—would be only the intellectual patina of a much more nefarious plot to invade the United States by means of secret underwater stations from which thousands of German soldiers would flood the American coastline, Atlantic and Pacific.

It is not remarkable that this whole bizarre affair has been kept out of most of Lovecraft's correspondence: Lovecraft alluded to it only briefly in random letters to Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard when he asked them to pursue some leads in the matter; while certain letters to Vincent Starrett—who was of some importance in ultimately freeing Lovecraft from the clutches of the Germans—seem not to have been preserved. This volume, however, contains a key letter by Starrett which Lupoff has discovered. No doubt Lovecraft was debriefed by the U.S. government after the whole

incident was over, and asked not to mention it to anyone; and yet, as Lu-poff notes in conclusion, it is clear that the affair provided the nucleus for Lovecraft's "The Shadow over Innsmouth", where the purely political and military events here recorded were transformed by Lovecraft's literary al-chemy into a tale of cosmic horror.

Certain details in the narrative, however, might raise suspicions as to its reliability. I will require considerable documentation before believ-ing that Lovecraft, purely upon Starrett's insistence, had wine, brandy, and two martinis in the course of one evening! Lovecraft imbibes frequently in this book, and there is also a considerable amount of mastication going on—as Lovecraft once remarked, "how these birds do eat!" More seriously, why is it that Lovecraft, although at the end of the events he discovers the evils of Nazism, begins praising Hitler unabashedly in the 1930s?

Still, these questions aside, Lovecraft's Book is a major contribution to Lovecraftian biography. Parts of it read as excitingly as a novel, and the photographs gracing the volume call for high praise in themselves—each has been selected to illustrate the events of the chapter which it heads, and we find rare and lovely snapshots of Providence, Marblehead, and the leading characters of this drama. This work is bound to cause controversy—for, in spite of an impressive bibliography at the rear of the volume, there is no documentation for the specific incidents related here—but we are confident that an important and mysterious episode in Lovecraft's life, and in the political and social history of his time, has been elucidated.

FRANK BELKNAP LONG. *Autobiographical Memoir*. Afterword by Peter Cannon.

West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1985. 32 pp. \$4.95 pb. Re-viewed by Donald R. Burleson.

Having known Frank Long since 1970 (at first by correspondence, then meeting at conventions beginning with the First World Fantasy Convention, 1975, in Providence), and having known of him for a much longer time (since about 1955), I take much pleasure in reviewing this charming and important memoir, the reading of which has afforded me not only pleasant little echoes of things discussed with Frank Long over the years (e.g., Jungian synchro-nicity) but also many fresh glimpses of this modest, kind, insightful, and highly talented man, as well as interesting glimpses of those people about whom he reminisces, including H. P. Lovecraft, Harold Munn, and others.

In assessing this book, one might be tempted to say that in its ex-tended reminiscences of other people, it proportionally gives lamentably fewer details of the author's own life, of his developing career as a writer whose work spans several decades. In his splendid Afterword to the vol-ume, Peter Cannon correctly attributes this ordering of the priorities of inclusion to modesty, to Frank's ready willingness to let episodes about other writers take the place of dwelling upon his own numerous accom-plishments. But I believe there is yet more to be said on the point.

While no interested reader could fail to wish to see more detailed facts concerning the author's career—experiences with editors and the like—it seems to me that what is finally included is in a significant way more autobiographically valuable than what is omitted; for what we do see in the *Memoir* is not a catalogue of little facts, but rather a larger look at the man's fertile mind itself. We see, for example, his thoughts on the American literary establishments and their failure to give supernatural horror fiction its just recognition; here Frank ably points out the importance of the genre throughout the history of American literature and discusses the difficulties inherent in its all-too-gradual acceptance in critical circles. Surely such a penetrating look into the mind of one of the field's leading figures is highly valuable. And to the extent that someone may still feel the *Memoir* to be overly modest in some ways, one may on the other hand point out that that very ordering of emphases is itself reflective of the man; by saying less on some points, the book in a sense says more about its author, whose very silences are admirably self-descriptive. There is more of Frank Long in this little volume than at first meets the eye.

That Frank is the winner of an illustrious assortment of high awards (including the World Science Fiction Convention's first Fandom Hall of Fame Award and the World Fantasy Convention's Life Achievement Award) is well known, as is his writing, which stands solidly on its own merits. Characteristically, Frank Long does not speak of these things. What he does give us is an illuminating look into his thinking and feeling, particularly about writing and writers as they have informed his life, insights which no reader can fail to find fascinating.

Highly recommended.

H. P. LOVECRAFT. *In Defence of Dagon*. West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1985. 38 pp. \$4.95 pb. Reviewed by Steven J. Mariconda.

The 1921 essays published here for the first time are among H. P. Lovecraft's most eloquent statements on art and philosophy, and lend important insight into the state of his thought at an early date in his fictional career. Lovecraft, of course, discussed his philosophy in surviving letters from the late 1910s and early 1920s, and in certain essays such as "Idealism and Materialism: A Reflection" (1919); but *In Defence of Dagon* is not merely his first really detailed discourse on both metaphysics and the aesthetics of the weird, but also one of the earliest instances where the interdependence of these two facets of his thought is evident.

In Defence of Dagon is comprised of three essays written for the Transatlantic Circulator, a loosely organized group of English and American amateur journalists who exchanged creative material and critical commentary in round-robin fashion. (Details of the group's exact operation remain somewhat obscure, though Lovecraft's mentions of "the Conductor's Notes" and

"the General Discussion folio" provide hints.) Lovecraft became involved in July 1920, featuring "The White Ship", which had recently won the Story Laureateship of the United Amateur Press Association. After circulating four more tales and a half-dozen poems, he withdrew in September 1921 due to the pressures of revisory work (and perhaps also the emotional debilitation caused by the death of his mother several months previously). We join the proceedings in January 1921, with Lovecraft replying to criticism not merely of his 1917 tale "Dagon", but also of his penchant for weird fiction and his philosophical outlook in general (evidently the other members of the Circulator were inclined to the traditional!). Aside from displaying exceptionally mature and well-reasoned positions in both aesthetics and metaphysics—in opposition to the commonly accepted view of a dogmatic and book-bound early Lovecraft—the author shows himself to be at the peak of his power as amateur journalist, flinging out many eminently quotable epigrams, posing rhetorical questions, quoting Nietzsche, and exercising the amusing if heavy-handed sense of irony that characterizes his other early amateur productions.

Lovecraft's replies to specific comments on his tales here provide information not to be found elsewhere. We learn, for example, that "Dagon" was at least partly based on a dream (p. 13), and that "The White Ship" was (like the later "Silver Key") intentionally used as a vehicle for its author's philosophy. Lovecraft also declares that the "gentle" Musides did in fact poison his fraternal rival Kalos in "The Tree", although (as Donald R. Burleson points out in his recent *Critical Study*) there is no hard textual evidence of this. Equally interesting is Lovecraft's forceful defence of phantasy's integrity as a genre. With the artificiality of romance at one extreme and the banality of realism at the other, phantasy alone, he insists, "exists to fulfil the demands of the imagination" (p. 11). As he would later in both letters and "Supernatural Horror in Literature", he assails didacticism in literature, saying that the true artist does not construct a commodity for a particular market's needs but instead depicts the imaginative "moods and mind-pictures" (p. 12) which clamour for expression.

Some facets of Lovecraft's own unique aesthetic of weird fiction, many of which would later be expanded and systematized, are also displayed. "To trace the remote in the immediate" (p. 21) is a priority, and in this we may detect an indication of Lovecraft's later belief that effective phantasy is not a negation but an extension of reality. So too do we encounter an admittance of inability to adopt a humanocentric perspective, even if for the purposes of fiction alone. Lovecraft also expresses his intent to avoid the didactic: "the story is first, and if any philosophy creeps in, it is by accident" (p. 13). Despite his adherence to this, it is by now well known that the best of his tales are unified by a thread of cosmic indifferentism which, by virtue of its strength and coherence, could not help but to make itself evident there.

It is the materialism at the core of Lovecraft's aesthetics to which he devotes most of these essays, his remarks taking the form of a reply to points raised by another, rather ingenuous member of the Circulator, a Mr.

Wickenden. Not surprisingly, many of the components of Lovecraft's mature philosophy are already in place here. For example, he is already calling himself a mechanistic materialist, even if as recently as 1915 he could still number himself an agnostic (vide SL I.11). He does, however, mention pessimism as a distinguishing feature of his outlook, which shows that he had not fully formulated his concept of indifferentism at this time.

One especially thought-provoking segment of the book is Lovecraft's deft response to Wickenden's attacks upon one of materialism's most basic (and in some ways its weakest) foundation, that of epistemology. Can we really "know" that religious faith is less valid than scientific fact, since both are essentially interpretations of nature? Fact, Lovecraft counters, is not easily challenged; for it is determined by reason, and "reason has never yet failed" (p. 16). Scientific theory, then, is only that supported by data which are both reproducible and intersubjectively testable. Admittedly, "all theories must indeed be open to scoffing", but "surely those [theories] are weakest which claim most and have least corroboration, while those are strongest which depend most on solid observation" (p. 27). This and similar comments would lead us to conclude that even before the advent of quantum physics Lovecraft's realism was critical rather than naive; that is, he believed that scientific theories are not literal descriptions of nature but merely summaries of data for making predictions about observable phenomena.

Equally impressive is Lovecraft's multipronged assault on the concepts of immortality and the soul. He begins by pointing out that what idealists call the "soul" is simply the sum of consciousness and personality, and, working from pathology, he notes that damage to specific parts of the brain leads to a corresponding impairment of activity in those areas. He also questions the soul's existence on the basis of ontogeny (the "soul" undergoes a continual development throughout the life of the organism, which began as an embryonic cell) and phylogeny (the human "soul" must necessarily be traced back through a long evolutionary series of lesser mammal "souls"). Though the latter aspect of Lovecraft's attack largely follows Ernst Haeckel (especially chapter five of *The Riddle of the Universe* [Eng. tr. 1900]), the keenness of the argument as a whole is not to be denied.

Special mention should be made of the excellence of S. T. Joshi's introduction and notes, which greatly increase the usefulness of the text. The introduction is a fascinating essay in its own right. Joshi first unearths some of the surviving comments on Lovecraft's work by other members of the Circulator (the full text of which would have made a worthwhile appendix), and then makes a brief but enlightening examination of the background behind the philosophical portion of the essays. He also provides much bibliographic data, including a list of the works Lovecraft sent through the Circulator. The annotation is equally helpful, the reader being directed very specifically to works by authors as diverse as Wilde and Chesterton for a greater insight into the influences upon Lovecraft's thought.

Indeed, a reading of this volume cannot but help to instill such insight into Lovecraft as creative artist and thinker, and as such ought to be sought out by all with an interest in him.

BRIEFLY NOTED

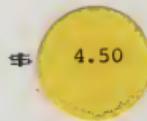
A new portfolio of Lovecraftian art has been produced by Robert H. Knox (available for \$10 from NIEKAS, RFD #1, Box 63, Center Harbor, NH 03226). Containing eleven drawings in pen and ink, the portfolio presents succulently grotesque renderings of the Outsider, the Whateley twins, Dagon, and other Lovecraftian visions. Knox's style reminds one vaguely of Bok or Coye, but in its shades of twisted humour it stands by itself. The portfolio contains an introduction by Ben P. Indick.

Necronomicon Press is launching a new journal, *Studies in Dark Fantasy*, modelled upon Lovecraft Studies but concerning such writers as Machen, Dunsany, Blackwood, Clark Ashton Smith, Hodgson, and even such modern figures as T. E. D. Klein, Les Daniels, Ramsey Campbell, and Peter Straub. Contributions should be sent to S. T. Joshi % Necronomicon Press. Articles should be no longer than 6000 words and should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope if return is desired. Projected date of publication of the annual journal is June 1986.

A token of Lovecraft's increasing foreign reputation is the translation of the Lovecraft-Rimel collaboration "The Tree on the Hill" in the distinguished Italian journal *Fiera* for March 1985. In the same issue is an excerpt from the recently discovered novelette by D. H. Lawrence, "Mr Noon". Meanwhile the Lovecraft-Rimel collaboration "The Disinterment" has appeared in a French translation in *Antares* (No. 17, 1985) with an introduction by S. T. Joshi and an excessively flattering account of Joshi's Lovecraftian work by Claudio de Nardi.

After a hiatus of some years, Lovecraft has returned to paperback in England. Panther Books has reissued Lovecraft's major fiction in a handsome set of three large volumes, titled, respectively, *At the Mountains of Madness*, *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, and *The Haunter of the Dark*. Unfortunately, the same corrupt texts as are available in hardcover from Gollancz were used, but nevertheless it is welcome to see Lovecraft again in paperback in the country he so admired but never saw.

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